

Technical Studies

ESTIMATES OF MEDIAN AGE AT HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE GRADUATION: 1960 AND 1950

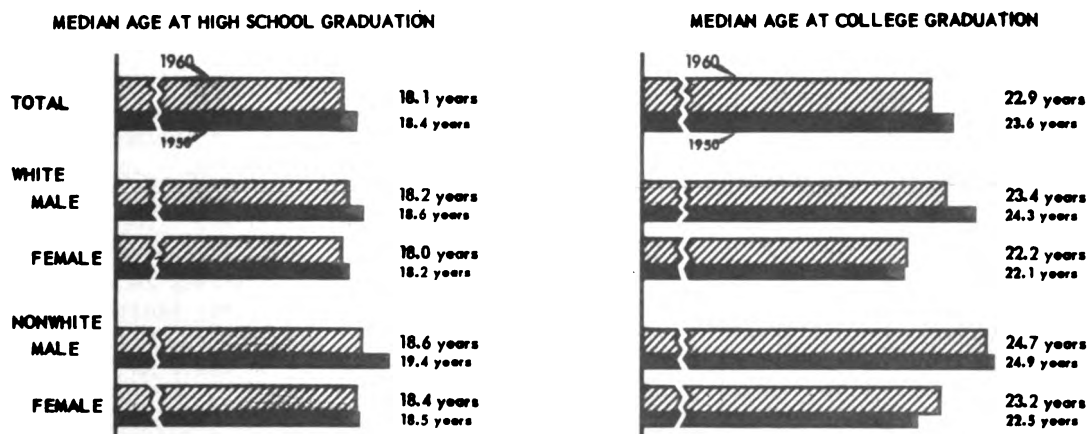
Reductions in the median age at high school graduation and in the median age at college graduation were generally characteristic of the period 1950 to 1960, according to estimates made by the Bureau of the Census.

The median age at high school graduation dropped from 18.4 to 18.1 during the 1950-1960 decade. The decline was especially sharp for nonwhite males, for whom the median was 19.4 in 1950 and 18.6 in 1960. For all groups, the decline in average age at high school graduation seemed to reflect the decreasing tendency

for some students to be retarded in school, that is, enrolled in a grade below that expected for their age.

The overall decline in median age at college graduation from 23.6 in 1950 to 22.9 in 1960 masked quite different patterns for men and women. The median dropped during the decade from 24.3 to 23.4 for white males and from 24.9 to 24.7 for nonwhite males. It was 22.1 in 1950 and 22.2 in 1960 for white females and went up from 22.5 in 1950 to 23.2 in 1960 for nonwhite females. These trends probably were

ESTIMATED MEDIAN AGE AT GRADUATION, BY COLOR AND SEX



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due to several factors, some of them compensating ones--the older war veterans in college in 1950, but not in 1960; the changing average age at high school graduation; and the tendency for relatively more young persons (especially nonwhite women) to pursue a college degree, even if on a part-time or interrupted basis.

The following technique was used in making the estimates of median age at high school graduation: (1) The distribution by age of persons enrolled in the last year of high school was obtained from the published census reports; (2) since age was recorded as of the April 1 census date, and since most high school students who graduated would have received their diplomas in June, the ages of high school seniors as of the census date were advanced one-sixth of a year to approximate their ages as of the graduation date; (3) a median based on the revised age distribution was computed. The same procedure was used to estimate median age at college graduation, except that the basic data consisted of the age distribution of persons enrolled in the fourth (academic) year of college.

Definitions and explanations of school enrollment, year of school in which enrolled,

age, color, and sex, and a statement on comparability and reliability of data on these subjects in 1950 and 1960, are included in chapter D of 1960 Census of Population, Volume I, Characteristics of the Population.

ESTIMATED MEDIAN AGE AT HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE GRADUATION, BY COLOR AND SEX: 1960 AND 1950

Color and sex	Median age at--			
	High school graduation ¹		College graduation ²	
	1960	1950	1960	1950
Total.....	18.1	18.4	22.9	23.6
Male.....	18.3	18.6	23.5	24.3
Female.....	18.0	18.2	22.3	22.2
White.....	18.1	18.4	22.9	23.7
Male.....	18.2	18.6	23.4	24.3
Female.....	18.0	18.2	22.2	22.1
Nonwhite.....	18.5	18.8	23.9	23.8
Male.....	18.6	19.4	24.7	24.9
Female.....	18.4	18.5	23.2	22.5

¹ Completion of the last year of high school.

² Completion of the fourth year of college.